



Exploring Norwegian Parish Registers

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For anyone setting out to research their Norwegian ancestry it is important having a basic knowledge of the process of Norwegian genealogical research procedures. Assuming you already know the specific place your ancestor was born in Norway, the process is quite straight forward. However, since the records are kept *at the parish level*, you must, as a general rule, know the specific parish. The records were kept by the local parish priest, and after 1812, a copy was kept by his warden/clerk.

The objectives for this class:

Understand what parish registers are and what kind of information they contain.

When did they start, and do the content vary during the various time periods?

The Records: The oldest parish register in Norway is from Andebu, and started 1623

Birth/christening: During the 1800's and 1900's you will find two dates in the birth/christening record, the birth date and the christening date. As you search back into the 1700's and 1600's you will find one date, and that will be the christening date. The christening was the responsibility of the priest, so the date on which he performed the christening would be the date he was concerned about.

Introductions: After giving birth the women were considered to be unclean, a tradition that goes back to early biblical times. They had to be re-introduced to the congregation before being allowed back into the church. This took place about six weeks after the baby was born. Because of this rule the mothers were rarely at their own children's christening.

Mothers of illegitimate children were introduced separately.

Confirmation: Around the ages of 14-17 the youth had to be confirmed. They would meet with the parish priest and study the Lutheran catechism. This was made law ab. 1736. In order to marry, serve in the military, or hold a political office the parishioners had to show proof of confirmation.

Engagement/Marriage: Going back in time an engagement was considered to be a legally binding contract. There had to be two sponsors/bondsmen which *could be* fathers or brothers, but did not have to be. Banns had to be read three consecutive Sundays before the wedding, to allow for any objections to the marriage taking place.

Death/Burial: In searching the death/burial dates you will, in recent times, find two dates; the death date and the burial date. As you go back in time you will find one date, and that will be the burial date. Criminals and suicides were not allowed to be buried in “sacred” ground, and had to be buried outside the cemetery boundaries.

Moving in and out: The moving records can usually be found between 1812-late 1800's. As people wanted to move out of the parish they had to have permission (in earlier time) and a certificate from the parish priest in order to do so.

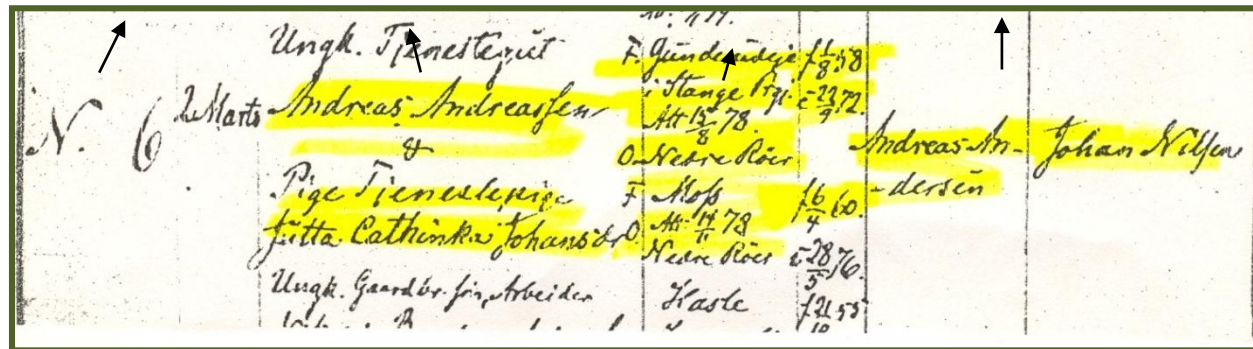
Absolutions: When parishioners had committed a “sin”, they had to be pardoned by the church. They had to stand before the congregation and confess their sin (s). The most common sins were adultery, having illegitimate children, theft, not partaking of the communion, and drunkenness.

The oldest parish register in Norway is from Andebu parish in Vestfold County, and starts in 1623. Most start late 1600- early 1700.



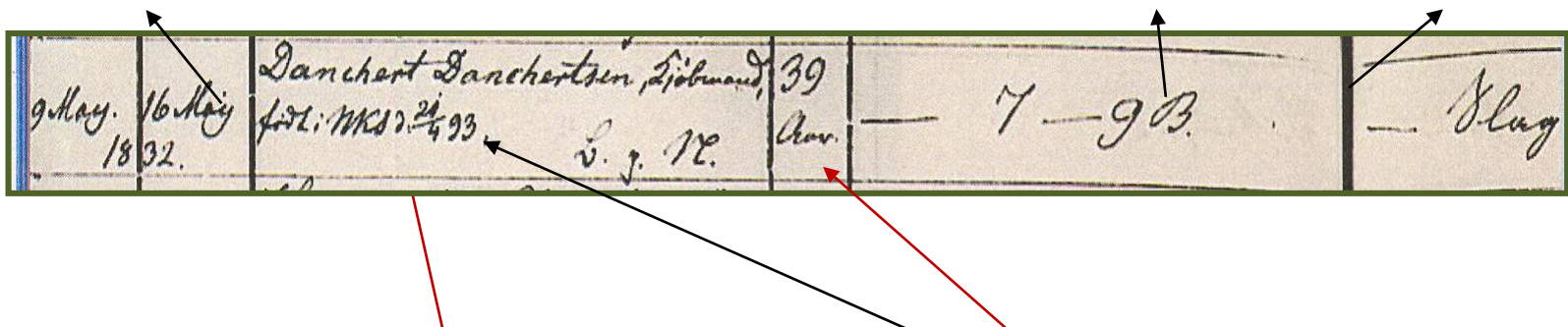
Christening date names of parents name of child godparents

***A christening record 1700's from Hedemark Co.**



Date of marriage Names of couple places and dates names of fathers
and occupations of births

***Marriage record from Akershus Co.**



Death/ burial, Name of the departed, occupation and birth info, age, residence, cause of death

***A death/burial record 1832 from Bergen**

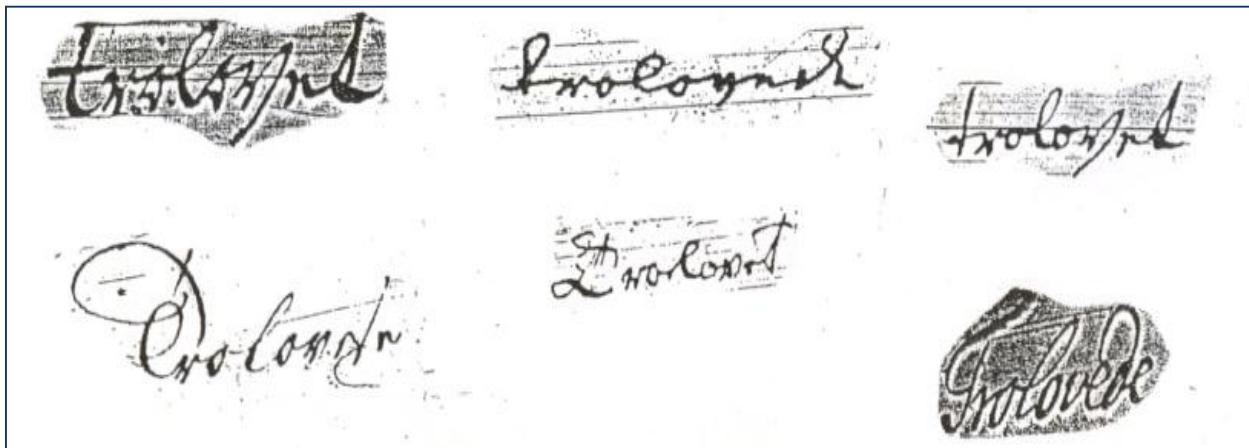
Gothic Handwriting: In order to read the Old Norwegian (Scandinavian) parish records you need a basic understanding of the Gothic handwriting. There are places online where you can find examples and help. On the main page on "www.digitalarkivet.no" there is a place called "A course in Gothic handwriting" that can be very helpful.

Common words found in the parish register

Births



Engagements



Marriages

Copulacade

Dejthyskab

Egtviede

Wigs

Copulati

Copulacade

Wigda

Wigde

Wigda

Wigda

Wigda

Deaths

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